

Congressman Kevin Brady

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Remarks on the occasion of the rescue of 3 American hostages by the Colombian military from the FARC

- Madame Speaker, I rise today to extend my congratulations and deepest appreciation to President Álvaro Uribe of Colombia.
- Under President Uribe's strong leadership and with U.S. support, the Colombian military skillfully planned and executed one of the most daring rescue missions we have ever seen.
- Without a shot being fired, brave Colombian soldiers fooled the FARC – terrorists that hide in Colombia's vast jungles – and rescued 15 hostages, including three Americans: Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell, and Thomas Howes, held in captivity since 2003.
- It is a joyous occasion that these men are now safely back home with their families, and that the people of Colombia have won a historic battle in their war against the FARC, which has terrorized the country for decades under the front of revolution. As Mr. Gonzalves himself said, "The FARC is not revolutionary. It is not revolutionary. They're terrorists." While seriously weakened, it still holds more than 700 hostages in captivity.
- This latest success marks another example of how Colombia has transformed itself under the leadership of President Uribe. The FARC has been dealt a series of dramatic blows, thousands of paramilitary fighters have been demobilized and are re-entering society with the help of social programs, the murder rate has declined significantly, the nation's judicial system is stronger, and its democratic institutions are stronger.

- Colombia has changed, and the United States can no longer sit back and ignore its dramatic improvements in peace and security. There is an agreement before Congress today that will help Colombia even more – a trade promotion agreement that will act an important tool to aid the growth of Colombia's legitimate economy by attracting long-term investment, open its market for U.S. exporters, and importantly, and strengthen ties with a strong U.S. ally in Latin America.
- This Congress should approve the pending trade promotion agreement before the Congress today, and it must do so this year, or it will die with adjournment.